

https://www.reddit.com/r/murderbot/comments/tnf29k/some_criticism/

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14

Posted by

[u/goflett](#)

2 years ago

Some criticism

spoiler

I think that the books rely heavily on hacking to move the plot forward. If the murderbot and other bots cant hack the systems than the story cant go on.

Another thing is the media files that the murderbot open all the doors to it? Why is it so important that the other bots dont have it? Isnt there a service like Netflix that you can watch everthing for 10 \$?

28 comments

Comment as [Jolly-Bell-5248](#)

|



level 1

[Jolly-Bell-5248](#)

· [just now](#)

Yep, this is a common problem with Martha Wells writing, she'll have some super power that has no known limits, so that she can use it for anything she wants to accomplish the plot, even when it makes no sense. Hacking is used the exact same way vague, overpowered magic that somehow always manages to do exactly what it needed for the plot, and similarly stops working as soon as it would let the characters do something she doesn't want them to.

It's a very cheap, lazy way of writing. Instead of having real problems for the characters to face, she'll give them tools just vague enough that they'll turn

into whatever is necessary, without any work or real creativity ever needed.

1



level 1

[worfres_arec_bawrin](#)

· [2 yr. ago](#)

I think I thoroughly enjoy the series in large part because murderbot is a BAMF across the board, including hacking. I want to see murderbots struggle to find its place in humanity, but when it comes time to kill I want them to annihilate.

43

level 2

Comment removed by moderator · [2 yr. ago](#)



level 3

[worfres_arec_bawrin](#)

· [2 yr. ago](#)

I love the juxtaposition between the two, really makes me crack up.

12



level 2

[bookdrops](#)

· [2 yr. ago](#)

Murderbot uses hacking like it's magic in an interesting way. The digital landscape and digital bots feel alive to MB, and MB uses the feed like it's the Force in Star Wars.

22



level 3

[BettyBettyBoBetty](#)

· [2 yr. ago](#)

Great analogy

7



level 2

[TheThousandVoices](#)

· [2 yr. ago](#)

I hope MB gets a combat module upgrade at some point.

Also hope a heavily augmented human who can, to a degree, keep up with MB comes into play

2



level 3

[worfres_arec_bawrin](#)

· [2 yr. ago](#)

What do you think a combat module upgrade would entail? Like give them some “hidden” abilities or a big upgrade in hacking/mobility?

Also, I could be wrong but isn't the combat SecUnit they faced at the end the first arc pretty much the gnarliest opponent there could be in that universe? Maybe a secret military project or something along those lines ☐☐

1



level 4

[rasputinette](#)

· [2 yr. ago](#)

I'd love to see Wells really dig into the bio/mechanical potential of the world she's created. If you can make bot/human constructs, why not other kinds of hybrids? A three-way bot/human/alien remnant construct would be an awesome and awesomely creepy opponent for MB...

2



level 5

[worfres_arec_bawrin](#)

· [2 yr. ago](#)

Yes! I love your ideas, didnt think about it in that way but there's so much potential in the canvas she's made!

1



level 4

[TheThousandVoices](#)

· [2 yr. ago](#)

I imagine it would give MB enhanced cyberwarfare suites, even greater hacking ability than it already has, especially offensive capabilities. In *Exit Strategy* the combat SecUnit has enhanced hacking ability that outmatched MB's, and displayed higher battle tactics than simply running in guns blazing

Also it's been a recurring thing that SecUnits fight by "throwing themselves at the target and hoping to kill the shit out of them before they get destroyed", so I would assume MB would become a better tactician, a more efficient and precise fighter with an emphasis on maneuver warfare. But, that's a whole can of worms that I wouldn't expect Wells to dive too deep into

1



level 1

[bookdrops](#)

· [2 yr. ago](#) · edited 2 yr. ago

For your second point: In a media landscape so capitalism-dominated as the Corporate Rim, I absolutely believe that media files like Murderbot's

shows would all be as digitally locked up and separated and DRMed as possible so that corporations could squeeze as much money as possible out of customers. There wouldn't be one paid Netflix streaming service, there'd be hundreds (just like now!) with all different series walled off into different subscriptions, and in Corporation Rim streaming you'd have to pay an extra fee to watch newer episodes AND you'd still have to watch ads every five minutes AND you'd have to pay for features like closed captioning or a "pause" button, etc. etc. To make as much money for the corporations as possible!

In contrast, Murderbot's collection of media files are like a convenient Pirate Bay torrent collection of new videos ripped in high quality from Streaming Service You Don't Subscribe To Because It's Very Expensive, with no nasty viruses hidden in the files and with all the commercials already removed from the video. That's a very tempting bribe to a bored bot without money or MB's elite torrent-downloading hacker skills.



level 2

[CurlyChikin](#)

· [2 yr. ago](#)

That's assuming bots are even allowed to subscribe to entertainment feeds. Given Murderbot's experience, I doubt they are, nor do they earn any money to pay for them. So Murderbot's offer to share media is even more tempting.

25



level 3

[bookdrops](#)

· [2 yr. ago](#)

Some resourceful bots likely figured out how to watch ads to earn credits for media, until corporations put up human-detecting CAPTCHA to stop them ☹

11



level 2

[Momo_marauder](#)

· [2 yr. ago](#)

Also adding on, the Company only wants Sec Units using any of their storage for data they collect on the clients, so the Sec Unit's governor would prevent inappropriate use of most storage, therefore no where

to really keep it or stream it through(though we know they can “accidentally” dump some of their data).

14



level 2

[goflett](#)

[Op](#) · [2 yr. ago](#)

good point thanks.

3



level 2

[kuhboose-1](#)

· [2 yr. ago](#)

Also, I mean if you think at it like they're people, people do that sort of thing all the time. "Hey, if you do this for me you can use my Netflix" "Hey if I can tag along with you we can watch one of my movies on the way" I think it's also kind of implied that a lot of transport bots just like the company, they like having something around that sees them and talks to them and treats them like an intelligent, functioning being, rather than a tool. And even Miki, who is treated like that, gets excited by having a friend that can relate to her more than humans can.



level 1

[MjolnirPants](#)

· [2 yr. ago](#)

I think that the books rely heavily on hacking to move the plot forward. If the murderbot and other bots cant hack the systems than the story cant go on.

I don't understand how that's a criticism.

It's true for Star Wars and the force, The Dresden Files and magic, Star Trek and science, John Wick and violence, etc, etc.

It's true in real life, as well. Software developers don't get work done without developing software. Soldiers don't take objectives without engaging in combat. Comedians don't put on shows without telling jokes, etc.

I'm not trying to be an ass or get defensive about the series, I just don't understand how that's a criticism.

And it's not strictly true; there's violence in the books as well which helps progress the plot.

Another thing is the media files that the murderbot open all the doors to it? Why is it so important that the other bots don't have it?

This seems to be an aspect of the oppression other bots experience. They're not allowed access to it because the corporations want them to focus on doing their jobs and don't care about the bots' private lives: whether they're bored or even going crazy.

Isn't there a service like Netflix that you can watch everything for 10 \$?

I'm sure there is, but what would MBs billing address be? What credit card do they use?



level 2

[goflett](#)

[Op](#) · [2 yr. ago](#)

I mean everytime there is a problem MB hacks the systems and delete the footage or traces. Also the GAT does it for him. Its overly used to move the plot forward. Thats the criticism.



level 3

[eyeball-owo](#)

· [2 yr. ago](#)

MB actually starts off not being that good at hacking and develops its skill over time by practicing so I think it's a really justified plot device! I especially like in book 4 where it explicitly sits down and writes code to prepare for a mission.



level 3

[MjolnirPants](#)

· [2 yr. ago](#)

So then, as I pointed out, that's a criticism of storytelling in general and real life, as well, and ends up being meaningless.

If MB was skilled in diplomacy, they'd use diplomacy to solve problems. If they were skilled in metalworking, they'd make metal tools to solve their problem. If they were skilled in electronic engineering, they'd build electronics to solve their problems. But they're skilled in hacking and violence, so they use hacking and violence to achieve their goals.

You're basically saying that MB having and using defined set of skills is somehow a bad thing, and

that's nonsensical. The only other possibilities are either an incompetent protagonist who needs others to accomplish goals for them, or a Mary Sue who's good at everything.

9



level 4

[Jolly-Bell-5248](#)

· [just now](#)

Murderbot is absolutely a Mary Sue who's good at everything. And its pronouns are it/its, not they/them. I'll be nice and assume you've figured that out in the two years that have passed.

Martha Wells *telling us* that Murderbot has flaws is not the same thing as Murderbot actually having flaws. It's 100% a Mary Sue through and through, just like the rest of Martha Wells' protagonists.

1



level 1

[Kufat](#)

· [2 yr. ago](#)

Isnt there a service like Netflix that you can watch everthing for 10 \$?

Think of how much info you have to provide when signing up for Netflix, Amazon Prime, etc. (and also the fact that there's no feed access in interstellar space/wormholes.)

3



level 1

[Gamebird_MLB](#)

· [2 yr. ago](#)

I just came across this after I read your post and wanted to share:

From Rogue Protocol, page 27 (2nd page of chapter 2):

SecUnits are designed to be mobile components of SecSystems, every kind of SecSystem, so the company can rent us to as many different clients as possible, even those with proprietary equipment. The trick to hacking a SecSystem is making it think you're supposed to be there, and the company had helpfully provided us with all the code necessary for that.

3



level 1

[PlaceboJesus](#)

· [2 yr. ago](#)

The Company that rents SecUnits doesn't make the majority of its profits from the rentals, but from hacking and datamining their clients.

For this reason, SecUnit hacking skills are probably far better than their skills at providing physical security.

SecUnit has hacking skills far beyond that of most bots or constructs because that's 70% of his purpose.

There are also the other limitations of bots and constructs; ART could have hacked those media sources, yet somehow never thought to do so.

It's like it never occurring to a person to turn on the TV, but settling down to watch it when someone else does.

Some bots are as intelligent as puppies, some as intelligent as preteens. Very few are as intelligent or self aware as MB or ART because their functions don't require it, or it's not safe.

2



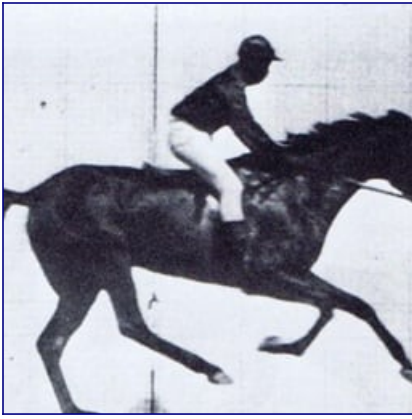
level 1

[rasputinette](#)

· [2 yr. ago](#) · edited 2 yr. ago

My take is that bot pilots have no interest in watching media. That's an anthromorphization on MB's part - just as humans think MB is more humanlike than she is, MB thinks bot pilots are more humanlike than they are. MB sends over the media. The bot pilots go, "...This data is unreadable, but let's not hurt the poor dear's feelings," and accept MB on board anyway.

2



level 1

[BulbousBalloons](#)

· [2 yr. ago](#)

I agree that Murderbot's tech is a little bit overpowered, like a Mary Sue that's socially awkward.

Spoilers ahead

My pet peeve is inconsistency within the series. In describing itself and its kind in the first book secUnits are, "cheaply produced and we suck," and installed with the cheapest <insert anything> modules. Throughout the rest of the series, its education modules are still crap but I see no evidence of secUnits sucking at what they do, and the reason Murderbot wasn't scrapped after its mass murdering incident is because secUnits are too expensive to replace.

In Figurine Telemetry, Murderbot informs Preservation Station Security that one of its functions was to investigate crimes and violent incidences in

slave labor camps, but ends up relying almost exclusively on what it's gleaned from the media it's consumed.

Part of this seems to be from how Martha Wells writes. Straight ahead with little to no outline. Which I'm not shitting on her for, I love the books, and every approach to art has its advantages and drawbacks. And the fact that the first book was originally intended to stand alone instead of the launchpad for a series of novellas written over several years.

Murderbot using media as a form of currency works in the Murderbot canon. This is a future where human societies are scattered far across the galaxy, and FTL wormhole travel takes days to months for a ship.

At the beginning of Exit Strategy, Ship exits a wormhole and is on approach to a station where a small GreyCris/Palisade battalion is already braced and waiting at the dock. Murderbot suspects that a message or news about Milu must have arrived on a faster ship, so we can conclude that information connectivity isn't as instantaneous among the stars as it is on earth.

And Netflix isn't the only entertainment source now. Disney, Paramount, Hulu, HBO, Crunchyroll is a start,

and that's only within the sphere of American content. I'm sure Murderbot swapping media files with different ships is like the inter-galactic trading card version of saying, "Hey, I'll give you a copy of my collection of Celtic rock music and Animé, if you give me a copy of your K-pop collection, Marvel superhero franchise, and let me ride with your cargo to the next station." I think it's kind of cute!

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level 2

[Jolly-Bell-5248](#)

· [just now](#)

Yep, exactly! And a lot of Mary Sues are actually written as socially awkward, because the writers think that that trait is enough to make up for...everything else about the character.

Every Martha Wells protagonist I've read so far is a Mary Sue, by definition. Everyone loves them as soon as they meet them, Martha Wells will just keep *telling us* they definitely totally have flaws and make mistakes, but then never actually shows us those flaws.

Like you said, we're somehow supposed to just believe two completely contradictory statements at once:

1. That SecUnits are the robot equivalent of disposable plastic cups -- cheap, easy to produce, mass produced, and thrown away after a single use.

But also:

- 2) That SecUnits are Super Expensive™ and worth a lot of money, and worth so much that the Company is willing to invest shit tons of money into their constant repair from catastrophic injuries, because they're "too expensive to abandon".

It's bad writing. Martha Wells wants the best of both worlds: The free angst for a tragic backstory if SecUnits are cheap and disposable, but she also refuses to have any real actual consequences for any fight Murderbot gets into, so it has to be easy to repair, so it can be magically healed like it didn't get ripped in half.

Murderbot is 100% a Mary Sue, and Martha Wells doesn't care how many basic inconsistencies she has to write into the series to keep it at that status. Has to be angsty and have cheap drama, so it has to get hurt a lot, but can't actually face any of the real problems that come with being constantly injured.

1



level 1

[TheFourthAlly](#)

· [2 yr. ago](#)

It uses the tools it has and is familiar with. It's the main reason MB even exists as a free agent to begin with. Had it not hacked its governor module, it

wouldn't be in a position to surreptitiously download media files and hide its activities. Which made it better at hacking again.

MB being what it is and the environment it exists in, it's kinda inevitable. In a way, it's like marveling at the effectiveness of a creature's camouflage. If you think about it, if it wasn't effective, there'd be no creature.

1



level 1

[Night_Sky_Watcher](#)

· [2 yr. ago](#)

I thought that the hacking was an aspect that brings the fiction closer to science. Martha Wells worked as a computer programmer and could envision a sophisticated bot brain programmed with significant resources (and ability to learn) that enables it access to numerous proprietary systems. And even as a lay person myself in this arena I could identify SecUnit's "ancient history" malware attack on targetControlSystem in *Network Effect* as a denial-of-service attack (learned from watching historical dramas). Plus I was just charmed that Murderbot 2.0 discovered that the organic brain tissue, which it no longer has access to, does so much heavy lifting in the arena of image interpretation (1.0 tends to be dismissive of its human parts).